Week 9: Estimation

This week, we learned about estimating user stories in agile. It is based on wisdom of the crowd. It means involving the team in interpreting the use story. It is believed that a group of people will bring better ideas than any single expert. As an example, in a market, people were asked to measure the weight of an ox. The 800 member’s guesses were collected, and their average was off by 1 pound on the actual weight of that ox. That’s the power of wisdom on the crowd.

Story points is a measure of the effort for a user story to be completed. The ratio matters not the numbers. The ratio doesn’t have to be 1 to 1. It should be proportional to the work. The risk and uncertainty with a project should also affect the story points on a user story. More complex stories should also be reflected in user story points.

Planning poker, product owner, scrum master and team come together to discuss the story and breakdown the story to specific questions and measure the project on story points. If the teams share the same points, its accepted. If the points are not similar, discussions are held and revaluated the user story points. It also highlights if the project has product uncertainty or technical uncertainty or both.

Estimation starts either on product grooming stage or sprint planning stage. We need to spend enough time to get a closer accuracy on the user story points. Also, be aware, there are no dog points. But if the team has a affinity to dogs, let’s use dog points for assigning values to user points. Use a Fibonacci sequence as it avoids the problem on story points being close to each other. Closer points will create confusion as there will never be a concusses in the team.

In agile, we don’t use hours for estimation but story points from the modified Fibonacci numbers. We set a benchmark with a user story which we believe is a “two” and assign values to the stories based on that benchmark. On all other story, team picks a number and checks with the others. If all agree, story points are assigned, if not, team discusses and move their points value, until all members agree to a story point. If the team is adamant on going different points for consecutive rounds but the numbers are consecutive, choose the bigger option. If the numbers are really off, do not assign points to that story.